

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

~~Top Secret~~
119

7 December 1967

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Information as of 1600

7 December 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

The Communists have mounted their heaviest mortar attack against US Marine outposts near the Demilitarized Zone since September. The commanders of South Vietnam's four corps areas object to government reorganization plans which would diminish their power.

I. Military Situation in South Vietnam: Nearly 300 mortar and artillery rounds were fired at US positions in the Con Thien area on 6 December in what may be a prelude to larger attacks in Quang Tri Province (Paras. 1-7).

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Two sharp clashes took place in Binh Dinh Province on 6-7 December (Paras. 9-10).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

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Two groups in the Lower House are trying to organize themselves as blocs, while a third group appears to have slowed down in its efforts at both organizing and recruiting (Paras. 3-8).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Nearly 300 enemy artillery and mortar shells were fired at US Marine positions near Con Thien on 6 December, the firing was the heaviest since the withdrawal of many of the enemy in late September.

2. The enemy shelling included 60-mm., 82-mm., and 120-mm. mortars and 85-mm. artillery. Seven Americans were killed and 75 wounded. The number of enemy soldiers killed by our counterfire is unknown.

3. At the same time, units of the 4th Marine Regiment some two-and-a-half miles northeast of Con Thien were hit by an estimated North Vietnamese company which attacked with small arms, machine guns, and bazooka-type B-40 rockets. Six Marines were killed and 32 wounded. A Medevac helicopter was hit by enemy fire and disabled.

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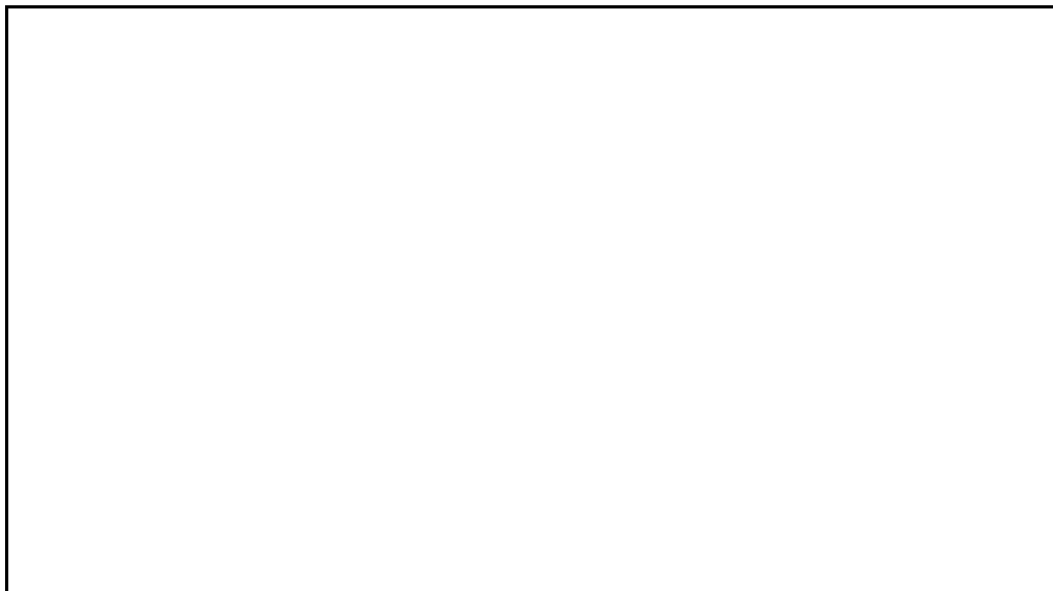
5. Two subordinates of the 90th Regiment--the 8th and 9th battalions--have been extremely active near Con Thien. These units recently engaged an American battalion northeast of the stronghold and have also been involved in numerous small-unit actions. Additionally, these units have performed extensive reconnaissance activities in the area. Combat elements of the 90th Regiment have had considerable mortar, artillery, and rocket fire in support of their activities.

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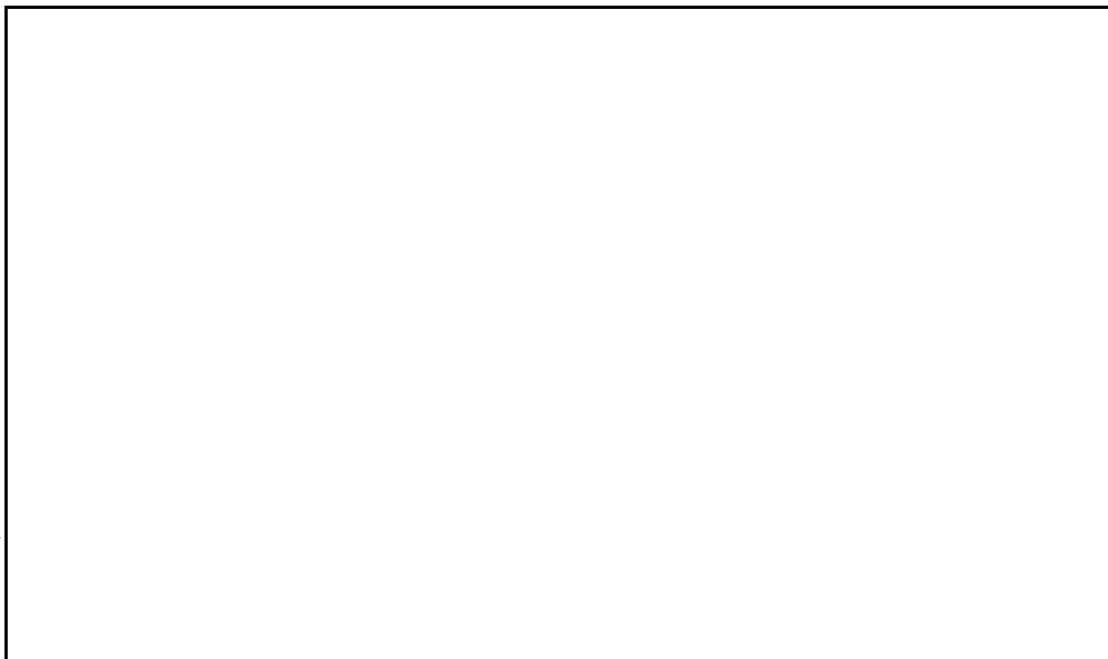
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7. The renewed enemy activity, coupled with the recent movements of enemy troops back into the Con Thien area, suggest that the North Vietnamese may have decided to begin another round in this area, possibly in conjunction with an offensive near Khe Sanh in western Quang Tri Province. This threat comes at the peak of the monsoon season in the northern provinces. Most major allied land supply routes are closed and tactical air support is hampered.



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Step-up in Binh Dinh

9. Two sharp clashes in Binh Dinh Province on 6-7 December resulted in ten US and South Korean soldiers killed compared with 77 enemy killed. In addition, 25 South Vietnamese civilians were wounded on 5 December when enemy forces attacked a Revolutionary Development training center in Binh Dinh.

10. The heaviest fighting occurred in the US 1st Cavalry Division's Operation PERSHING in northern Binh Dinh. During the morning of 6 December two companies of the 1st Cavalry fought an estimated reinforced enemy company in bunkers and trenches. Sporadic fighting continued throughout the day and the US troops held down the enemy during the night with artillery and tactical air strikes. Ground action began again on the 7th and was continuing at last report. Enemy losses in this action are 43 dead.

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Activities of Lower House Blocs

3. Members of the Lower House have been active recently in consolidating blocs, forming alliances, and lining up candidates for the house officers.

4. [redacted] the largely Catholic Independence Bloc formally organized itself as a political group after receiving written pledges of adherence from 28 deputies during a meeting on 2 December. They elected officers and gave the chairmanship to Gia Dinh deputy Nguyen Quang Luyen, a Buddhist, in an effort to defuse charges that the bloc is solely Catholic. It was further agreed that the bloc would seek the election of several of its number to Lower House offices. These include the positions of deputy chairman, secretary general, and deputy secretary general, as well as the chairmanships of several committees.

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5. Bloc leaders, [] have tentatively decided to seek an alliance with the pro-government Democratic Bloc and have extended informal feelers to test the Democratic Bloc's reaction. The leaders reportedly believe their proposal will be accepted since an alliance of the Independence Bloc's 28 members and the Democratic Bloc's 51 members would give the two a working majority in the house.

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6. As for the Independence Bloc's attitude toward the government, []

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[] it will support government programs which it deems worthwhile, but does not want to become a rubber stamp. The bloc has reportedly decided against an earlier plan to form a loose alliance with the largely Buddhist, antigovernment Progressive Bloc. Independence Bloc leaders now believe that the Progressives are too anti-government and that such an alliance would hurt the bloc.

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7. The All Vietnam Bloc, a group originally formed to support Vice President Ky's presidential candidacy, is also attempting to organize itself as a formal bloc in the Lower House, but is reportedly having difficulty. []

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[] bloc members, including seven Lower House deputies, were unable to agree during a meeting on 4 December whether the bloc's Lower House branch should be overt or covert. As a result, the group made no progress. Bloc chairman Tran Van An is reportedly confident, however, that the bloc can muster the support of 18 to 20 deputies in the Lower House and claims firm commitments from 17. These include Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Nationalist Party (VNQDD) deputies.

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8. The Farmer-Worker-Soldier Bloc is having even more difficulty in organizing its Lower House contingent. The bloc's liaison man with the Lower House has not been attending meetings of the group's working committee, []

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and the bloc has apparently done little to increase its strength. [] a bloc member recently that some 20 Catholic deputies would like to cooperate. Nothing has yet been done to follow this up, and bloc leaders do not even know the deputies' names.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Liberation Front Propaganda

1. Spokesmen for the Vietnamese Communists are presenting a studiously non-Communist picture of the kind of settlement for South Vietnam envisaged in the Liberation Front's new political program. They try to make the program as appealing as they can and to soft-pedal the principal objective--a US withdrawal and a Communist political take-over.

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